

This is BILK Number 57 for January 1994. From Jan 1, 1994, my address will be: Fribolinstraße 5, 74321 Bietigheim-Bissingen, Germany. Subscriptions are still DM 15 for Europe and DM 20 for the rest of the globe.

BEHEMOTH

● Loch Ness: What is the most important clip of this issue comes from Andreas Trottmann. It is from the Inverness Courier's 125 years ago-section, dated to their edition of Oct 8, 1868: "A Strange Fish in Loch Ness - A few days ago a large fish came ashore on the banks of Loch Ness about two miles to the west of Lochend Inn. Neither the name nor the species of the strange visitor could be satisfactorily explained, and large crowds of country people went to see and examine for themselves, but left without being able to determine whether the monster was aquatic, amphibious, or terrestrial. Some of the most credulous of the natives averred that a huge fish, similar in size and shape, had been occasionally seen gambolling in the loch for years back, and with equal determination protested that it being cast dead on the shore boded no good to the inhabitants - that, in fact, its presence presaged dire calamities either in pestilence or famine, or perhaps both. At least, however, an individual better skilled in the science of ichthyology appeared on the scene, and ascertained that the strange visitor was nothing more or less than a bottle-nosed whale about six feet long. How one of the denizens of the ocean came to be cast ashore at Loch Ness was the next question, but this, too, has been set at rest, for it was ascertained that the blubber had been taken off! The fish had, of course, been caught at sea, and had been cast adrift in the waters of Loch Ness by some waggish crew to surprise the primitive inhabitants of Abriachan and surrounding districts. The ruse was wminently successful." The report shows many things I have said for years - that all pre 1930-reports of the Loch Ness monster turn out to be either folklore or hoaxes, that, had there been 19th cen-sightings, they'd been reported by the local press (Nessie believers usually make the inhabitants of the Loch before 1900 appear to be a superstitious native tribe, to afraid of the monster to talk to the outside world. The lines about a big fish having been seen in the LOch may be due to people jumping on the band-waggon after the find, something well known from monster hoaxes today, or genuine sightings. But then, they don't refer to a seaserpent, but a big fish, and only 6 ft long - hardly the kind of sighting to compare with 30 ft plesiosaurs. We know seals occasionally travel into the LOch, and that could explain these early reports without problem.

● Bibliography: Loch Ness - Again clipped by Andreas Trottmann, the Inverness Courier of Sept 3, 1993, reported on an expedition to raise Nessie by Doc Shiels-like magic ceremonies, by Bavarian artist Andreas Tschinkl. / Magazin 2000, the German New Age mag, in the Oct 93 issue, has an article by Michael Hesemann on dino-human coexistence, listing the stuff well known from Däniken's books, ie Cabrera stones, Paluxy tracks, etc. // The iwz had an article on parachute jumping at the Salto Angel, the world's largest waterfall in Venezuela (April 10, 93). This is on the tablemountain where locals have seen dinosaurs, and it can't be that remote anymore with all the tourists visiting. // In a report on British Columbia, Maier magazine (Mannheim, Oct 93, p.66) mentions that Ogopogo is the region's most known tourist attraction. // Strange 12 (Sept 93) has several notes on lake monsters: Lake Erie monster (p.5 & 28); Lake Galilee, Israel, monster, p.28; Loch Ness expeditions, p.28; Ogopogo sighting, p.31; new books on Congo dinos, Muskrat Lake monster, p. 44

ISIS

● Hongkong: 2000 inhabitants of Hongkong, according to an AP report in the Filderzeitung (Oct 14, 93), waited in the city's harbour for a mermaid. AS reported by the South China Morning Post, a fisherman named To had reported via the wireless: "I have caught a creature with long, human hair, a pointed face but no limbs." The story spread rapidly among the "superstitious" fishermen. Each time a boat or ship came into the harbour, they shouted "Here she comes" or "There it is". But neither To nor the mermaid appeared. So, we may assume it was a hoax, an innocent joke by To which got out of hand, or a rumor in the first place. But rational people have to rationalize, so skeptics pointed out that To had most likely caught a sea cow and mistaken it for a mermaid. Not likely, if the description is correct.

● Bibliography: The Hongkong mermaid hoax was also mentioned in the Eßlinger Zeitung, Oct 14, p. 17. // Sightings of a mermaid (repeatedly) and a merman in a salt-water lagoon at Keaau, Hawaii (no date, no details) referred to in a letter-to-the-editor in Strange # 12, p.4. // I have neglected Francois de Sarre's clips on his initial bipedism recently. According to de Sarre, man is the oldest animal and all other animals have evolved from a proto-human, a worm-like aquatic beast that developed

a globe like swim bladder which later turned into the skull. If he is correct, real mermaids could actually exist. In his magazine Bipedia (CERBI, BP 65, 06202 Nice, France), which is now typeset with a laser printer and is published only once a year, he had another article on the "marine homunculus" (# 10, June 1993, p.3). Also on hypothetical aquatic man, he had a report in the German EFODON News, Oct 1992, p. 13 (credit: F de Sarre). //In Strange # 12, p. 2, Fred Olen Ray speaks of a "rash of bipedal reptile sightings" in California.

LEVIATHAN

- Cook Islands: Reports which would never make it beyond the local newspapers reach us now due to the publicity of Jurassic Park. I have an afp-report from the Swiss Le Martin (Sept 30, 93, credit Andreas TRottmann). I don't read French, so please take my translation with some caution: "A water dino - A Pastor and his son saw a sea monster 'resembling a dinosaur' at an isolated atoll close to the Cook Islands in the Pacific. Reverend Soloma and his son affirm they were situated between the atolls of Rakahanga and Manihiki, the the north of the Cook Islands. The event was reported by the local press. The two men were fishing, and closed in on a bank of fish which turned out to be an animal of a frightening appearance whose neck was over the water, according to the Cook Islands News. The two men described the monster as similar to a lizard with the tail of a whale."
- Bibliography: Another sea serpent is mentioned by Loren Coleman in his column in Strange # 12, p.29. In March 1991, a 60-ft reptile was washed ashore at the island of Butachagues in Chile. It had no bones, but cartilage and "a tail like a fish". The newspaper called it a "living fossil", but Coleman is certainly correct in identifying it as a decomposed shark. // The Magazin für Grenzwissenschaften # 5/1993, p. 261, quoting a German magazine on dinosaurs, says a dead mosasaur was washed ashore in Gambia in 1983. This refers to the Gambian sea serpent, now well known, although to definitely identify what may have again only have been a shark is a bit over the top. // Two palaeontologists, John Long and Alex Ritchie, have found the almost intact skull of a "marine dinosaur" (there never were marine dinosaurs, so this refers to a plesiosaur, ichthyosaur or mosasaur), some 110 million years old, to the north of Perth, Australia. The skull is almost 50 cm long (EBlinger Zeitung, Oct 13, 1993, p.14).

MARINE LIFE

- Whales: The sad story of several repeted strandings of one (or two) schools of pilot whales close to Farewell Spit, New Zealand: Filderzeitung, 8. Nov 93; Rheinpfalz, 10 & 11. Nov 93. // The piranha mentioned in last Bilk was fished in the Elbe River near Dessau, Germany. The 28 cm-fish was, according to the director of the Natural History Museum in Dessau, an aduld. He speculated it was a pet fish set free (Die Rheinpfalz, August 27, 93). // At Bodega Bay (the set for Hitchcock's The Birds) a "gigantic white shark" attacked the kayak of a woman and threw it into the air. The woman was unharmed, but the bite of the shark measured 51 x 38 cm! "Experts" assumed the shark was 4 m (13 ft) long and weighed 500 kilogrammes. Now signs at the beach warn bathers. (Filderzeitung, Oct 14, 93; and Süddeutsche Zeitung, same date).

DISCOVERIES

- The u-boat mentioned in last Bilk as having been discovered in a coal mine in Turkey on Sept 3 is no longer a mystery. The German Embassy in Ankara reported the submarine had exploded on Dec 7, 1916 after ramming a sea mine. The submarine, of the UB-46-type, had then been washed (or towed) ashore, where it was later covered by sand-dunes - so what had at first sounded like a von Däniken-story was not so mysterious after all. (Die Rheinpfalz, Sept 22, 93) ///A Cape Town archaeologists claims he has discovered the remains of a phoinician galley during excavations. Amateur scientist O'Sullivan reported the ship had already been discovered in 1880, when the wood was used as fuel. The 54 m-ship is in Table Mountain Bay, now some miles from the coast, and after having dated the wood to 1875 years of age in Zürich, Cape Town University backs up O'Sullivan's claims: they now want to excavate the sensational thing (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, March 30, 93, p. 10). /// While filming a programme on archaeology for German TV, archaeologists have discovered a Slav settlement and castle on the bottom of the Kleiner Pönitzer See, a lake in East Holstein. The lake dwellings date to the 11th C and were completely submerged and forgotten when a canal dug in 1700 raised the water level by 2 m. The Slavs lived in Germany from 800 AD for some 350 years, before they were converted to Christianity, and started to speak German to become the Prussians (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Nov 22,93,p.10)